

Message Text

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72

ORIGIN DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ADP-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 EUR-25 IO-12 PM-09 H-02 INR-09

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EA/ P: MR. ROSEN

S/ PRS: MR. BRAY

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O R 272320 Z MAR 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

CINCPAC

RTAFB NKP THAILAND

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E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, CB

BANGKOK AND NKP FOR JCRC

SUBJECT: PW'S - WALTER CRONKITE

1. WALTER CRONKITE APPEARED ON CBS EVENING NEWS (LEAD
STORY) MARCH 26 STANDING OUTSIDE LPF RESIDENCE IN VIEN-
TIANE DISCUSSING AMERICAN PW/ MIA" S IN LAOS. CITING
SOURCES IN VIENTIANE, CRONKITE SAID UP TO "200" US PILOTS
SURVIVED SHOOTDOWNS IN LAOS, OF WHOM "100" MAY BE IN
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CAPTIVITY. ALSO SAID SUBJECT CURRENTLY BEING DISCUSSED WITH SOTH PETHRASI BY USG OFFICIALS.

2. IN RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS CALLS FROM PW/ MIA RELATIVES AND NEWS MEDIA, WE HAVE SAID ON BACKGROUND THAT US CONTINUES TO PRESS LPF FOR INFORMATION ON AMERICAN MIA'S IN LAOS, BUT THAT THERE IS NO BASIS IN FACT FOR FIGURES CITED.

3. SUGGEST EMBASSY IF FEASIBLE DISCUSS WITH CRONKITE BOTH TO RE- EMPHASIZE USG COMMITMENT TO MIA ACCOUNTING AND TO PUT HIS NUMBER ESTIMATES INTO PERSPECTIVE. WE

SUSPECT HIS NUMBERS COME FROM SAME VIENTIANE HANGERS- ON WHO HAVE BEEN SOURCE OF MISLEADING REPORTS IN PAST. ANY CLARIFICATION CRONKITE MIGHT BROADCAST ON THIS SUBJECT WOULD BE HELPFUL.

4. IN DISCUSSION WITH CRONKITE, YOU COULD ALSO ASK WHETHER HE HAS DEVELOPED ANY NEW INFO ON US JOURNALISTS MISSING IN CAMBODIA. CRONKITE IS CHAIRMAN OF US SECTION OF INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS ON DANGEROUS MISSIONS, WHOSE REPRESENTATIVE, ZALIN P. GRANT (US CITIZEN- JOURNALIST) HAS BEEN IN INDOCHINA IN RECENT WEEKS TO FOLLOW LEADS ON MISSING JOURNALISTS. WE HAVE SEEN PRESS REPORT (FOISIE IN LA TIMES 3/22) TO EFFECT THAT WESTERN JOURNALISTS WERE SEEN AS LATE AS MID-1972 IN CAMBODIA UNDER NVN GUARD. REPORTS SAID TO COME FROM RECENTLY RELEASED ARVN PW' S INTERVIEWED IN SVN (PRESUMABLY BY GRANT). WOULD APPRECIATE ANY CLARIFICATION CRONKITE CAN PROVIDE. (FYI, CRONKITE HAS DISCUSSED SUBJECT SEVERAL TIMES IN RECENT MONTHS WITH SIEVERTS, D/ PW). ROGERS

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*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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